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SUBJECT: UN DEMOCRACY CAUCUS

REF: A. USUN 671
 B. USUN 736
 C. STATE 97313

¶1. Action requested: please see paragraph 6.

¶2. The Permanent Representatives of 14 UN Member States met over lunch Oct. 27 at the Mission of India "to discuss issues of mutual interest relating to Democracy," as Indian Ambassador Nirupam Sen wrote in his invitation. Although not calling themselves the UN Democracy Caucus, the guests all represented countries participating in the Community of Democracies: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, India, Japan, Lithuania, Mexico, Mozambique, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, UK, and the United States. CD participants Cape Verde, Mali and Morocco were also invited but did not attend. The meeting was an initiative of Ambassadors Khalilzad and Sen, stemming from bilateral talks they have held since May about reviving the UN Democracy Caucus (ref A).

¶3. Ambassador Sen proposed five issues (previously agreed with Ambassador Khalilzad) on which the group could focus: a possible Third Committee resolution entitled "Education for Democracy" drafted by the Council for a Community of Democracies; an event to share best practices on democracy and good governance as a follow-up to the CD's Bamako ministerial meeting; support for a strong and independent Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in discussions of the OHCHR's work program currently underway in the Third Committee; a possible Third Committee resolution on "Women and political participation," last adopted in 2003; and support for a draft Swiss-Guatemalan General Assembly plenary resolution on the report of the Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor (ref B).

¶4. The group generally reacted positively to the idea of reviving the Democracy Caucus, and to the thematic proposals presented. Canada called the idea attractive. The Philippines said democracy is about more than free and fair elections, and democratic governance must take into account economic development issues as well. Mexico was somewhat ambivalent, however, questioning the impact on democracy of crises such as those involving the world's financial, food, and energy markets. India cautioned the group should not attempt to take on issues it cannot handle. Chilean Ambassador Munoz said he was personally enthused about the idea of reviving the Caucus, but it needed to be pragmatic and could not realistically attempt to do anything regarding the financial crisis; our time is limited, he said, and we have to pick things we are all willing to work on. Australian Ambassador Hill said the group should focus on issues where it could add value, such as generating new contributions for the UN Democracy Fund. Japan said the idea of reviving the Caucus was compatible with Japan's own "human security" initiative. Mozambican Ambassador Chidumo agreed the group should start by focusing on small, specific issues; in time it could try to be more ambitious; he also urged more African participation. The UK, saying democracy is under pressure in Russia, suggested a possible resolution on democratic standards, and Mexico proposed an organ or

pressure group to monitor human rights and democracy; but Portugal said the Caucus should focus on existing institutions. Poland said the focus should be on democratizing non-democracies, but India cautioned the Caucus should start small.

¶5. The group agreed to meet again in November, at the invitation of Australian Ambassador Robert Hill, and to try to come up with an agreed list of projects or issues in priority order on which a revived Democracy Caucus could focus its attention.

¶6. Action request: please provide guidance on the issues discussed above and any others the Department believes the Democracy Caucus could usefully and realistically undertake. In our view, the Caucus should start with a modest agenda. Few CD members, even the small group described here, have the time or inclination to embark on major new initiatives and most are subject to the competing demands of regional groups and interest groups such as the G77, the NAM, and the OIC. In our view the Democracy Caucus could become "an added mechanism for like-minded democratic nations to cooperate in areas such as human rights, good governance, and the rule of law," as envisioned in the Department's latest cable on U.S. priorities for the CD (ref C); but it will take time and careful nurturing.

Khalilzad